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*Genetic Criticism and the Creative Process*

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the Creative Process*

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*Essays from Music, Literature, and Theater*

EDITED BY WILLIAM KINDERMAN  
AND JOSEPH E. JONES

 UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER PRESS

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W. K.



# *Introduction*

## *Genetic Criticism and the Creative Process*

WILLIAM KINDERMAN

Not only the final outcome but also the *process* of creative endeavor has long attracted attention in various artistic disciplines, but only recently has the potential of such research been seriously explored. The most rigorous basis for the study of artistic creativity comes not from anecdotal or autobiographical reports, but from original handwritten sketches and drafts and preliminary studies, as well as from revised manuscripts and typescripts, corrected proof sheets, and similar primary sources. Especially since the eighteenth century, writers, composers, and painters have been much concerned with originality of style, which has encouraged intense preliminary efforts preceding and leading toward the production of finished artistic works.

The term “genetic criticism” or “critique génétique” relates not to the field of genetics, but to the genesis of works of art, as studied in a broad and inclusive context.<sup>1</sup> This approach stands in contrast to the so-called “new criticism” of the mid-twentieth century, with its formalist focus on the text itself and disinclination to probe issues of creative process, lest these involve entanglement with the so-called intentional fallacy. More recently, growing recognition of the value of contextual studies and of the problematic nature of the notion of a single definitive text have exerted a welcome influence. Especially promising are approaches that integrate source studies with interpretative analysis, probing the aesthetic meaning of artworks in a rich contextual field.

The chapters in this volume explore aspects of genetic criticism in an interdisciplinary context. A common through-line of many of these chapters pertains to the essential continuity between a work and its genesis. Genetic criticism might appear to destabilize the final text, undermining the work-concept by privileging genesis over structure. However, such an approach often opens perspectives that serve as a promising platform for critical interpretation, and analysis remains vitally important to the evaluation of sketches and drafts, whose content is often elusive and enigmatic. In practice, the insights offered by genetic criticism can

sometimes enrich our experience and appreciation of a composition more than studies that are confined to the finished work of art.

Such an approach departs from the idea of a singular, isolated, unassailable text, lifted out of history. Appropriately, then, this collection begins with a study that addresses the connections between genetic criticism, textural studies, and edition theory. Geert Lernout observes that outside of France, much work in “genetic criticism” has been pursued by scholars unfamiliar with that particular term. As an alternative, he proposes the formulation “radical philology,” whereby “radical” denotes the novelty and “philology” the continuity of this approach. Locating a classical model for philological scholarship in biblical studies, Lernout finds a basic incompatibility between genetic criticism and *a priori* assumptions about the infallibility of texts, claiming that “all serious critical and historical textual work is possible only if we leave behind all forms of religious and ideological dogma.”

The etymology of the word “text,” which derives from the Latin noun *textum*, meaning “woven fabric,” and the verb *texere*, “to weave,” reminds us of the status of texts as objects made of fallible materials, objects that are varied, supplemented, repaired, adorned, and reused in manifold ways. The ways texts are viewed has changed significantly over time. An awareness of this context alerts us to a dimension of genetic studies that reaches beyond the creative efforts of individual writers and artists: the matter of preexisting models and historical continuity. Some commentators, such as Harold Bloom, have regarded the cultural legacy of the past not simply as an asset to posterity but also as a burden, triggering an “anxiety of influence” that artists have sought to counteract by willfully “misreading” their predecessors, thereby clearing creative space for themselves.<sup>2</sup> Such a tensional attitude toward the past is especially characteristic of the past two centuries. Cultural critique is particularly threatening in a religious context, and Lernout describes the “fear of beginnings” that characterizes the handling of sacred texts by apologists, and identifies their dilemma: “truly Holy Books, precisely because they are divine and perfect, cannot logically have an historical beginning.”

The quest to explore origins is a far-reaching occupation that needs to confront the transmission of texts over long periods of time, involving translation and reassessment in changing historical contexts. Consider, for example, the famous dictum about which Immanuel Kant wrote in his *Critique of Judgement* of 1790: “perhaps nothing more sublime was ever said.” Almost thirty years later, the same maxim inspired Ludwig van Beethoven, who framed the inscription behind glass on his worktable:

I am all that is and that was and that shall be, and no mortal has lifted my veil.<sup>3</sup>

Beethoven lifted the quotation from an essay by Friedrich Schiller, who had taken it in turn from a little-known treatise by Karl Leonhard Reinhold titled *Die*

*Hebräischen Mysterien oder die älteste religiöse Freymaurerey* (The Hebraic Mysteries or the Oldest Religious Freemasonry). Reinhold published his study in 1788 under the pseudonym “Br[uder] Decius” (Brother Decius). He originally wrote it as a Freemason addressing fellow masons; following the suppression of the order, he had joined the Order of the Illuminates, in which his pseudonym was Decius. His treatise on the Hebrew mysteries was first published two years earlier for the Vienna *Journal für Freymaurer* edited by Ignaz von Born, Grand Master of the Masonic lodge Zur Wahren Eintracht (True Concord), a lodge visited at times by both Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who was a member of the sister lodge Zur Wohltätigkeit (Beneficence) and whose opera *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute) of 1791 is deeply invested with Masonic symbolism, with the character Sarastro modeled on Ignaz von Born.

In tracing this chain of connections to an obscure eighteenth-century Masonic tract, we have only yet scratched the surface. Plutarch (ca. 45–120 CE), in his treatise *Isis and Osiris*, alluded to “an enigmatic sort of wisdom” in Egyptian thought as reflected in the aforementioned dictum inscribed in a statue at Sais that no longer exists.<sup>4</sup> Further clues about the significance of this dictum have surfaced since the eighteenth century. In his 1997 study *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, the Egyptologist Jan Assmann probed the sources and context for Reinhold’s small book, which for Assmann represents “the missing link between Spencer and Freud,” a treatise whose importance lies in its equation of Egyptian esoteric monotheism and Mosaic revealed monotheism. As Assmann writes, “Reinhold does not see any difference between the Egyptian, or Hermetic, idea of the One and Biblical monotheism. He thinks that Moses believed in God as the One-and-All and instituted a new mystery religion which can be interpreted as the oldest form of Freemasonry.”<sup>5</sup>

In the 1780s, when Reinhold sought the roots of Freemasonry in ancient Egypt, he could not have known of Akhenaten, Pharaoh Amenophis IV from the fourteenth century BCE, the founder of the first known monotheistic counter-religion, whose memory was suppressed after his death and rediscovered only in the nineteenth century after hieroglyphs had been successfully deciphered. What has fascinated many writers in the past century is the apparent relationship between Akhenaten’s monotheistic revolution and the mythic figure of Moses. Assmann asks, “Was Akhenaten the Egyptian Moses? Was the Biblical image of Moses a mnemonic transformation of the forgotten pharaoh?”<sup>6</sup> Sigmund Freud and Thomas Mann, among others, have wrestled with these questions, as more recent authors continue to do.<sup>7</sup> But the “sublime” equation of the unnameable deity with nature (alias Isis) was already recognized by Reinhold and embraced by Beethoven in the form of his “Deist manifesto,” the Egyptian inscription from the statue at Sais that he kept at his desk.

Such dense, open-ended chains of connections mirror some of the kinds of research pursued by scholars of genetic criticism in their restless quest to disclose and interpret the *avant-texte* or “pre-text” of cultural works. This “pre-text” can be

long, recalling the maxim attributed to Hippocrates and echoed in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*: "ars longa, vita brevis" (art is long, life is short). Medieval epic poems offer another such example. While the Egyptian dictum from Sais has endured across the millennia, the weaving of tales in the European medieval context spanned hundreds of years in a longstanding oral tradition. The first surviving written versions of these epics stem from the end of the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. In this context, little emphasis was placed on a presumed originality of authorship, as embodied in the singular textural manifestation of an artwork. In his study *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, Bernard Cerquiglini describes medieval writing as a "workshop" activity that thrived on continuations and repetitions, producing multiple valid versions. There are several true versions of the medieval epic *The Story of the Grail (Perceval)*, the last romance by Chrétien de Troyes, for instance, and recognition of such plurality is basic to scholarship and to the making of editions. For Cerquiglini, "Variance is the main characteristic of a work in the medieval vernacular; a concrete difference at the very basis of this object, it is something that publication should, as a matter of urgency, make visible."<sup>8</sup> The collaborative aspects of the medieval context add further complexity. Within twenty years of the time when Chrétien broke off his work on *Perceval*, there were two attempts to continue his tale, as well as two very different versions of the Grail story placed within a Christian tradition, whereas the German version, *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach, while based on Chrétien, introduces many strikingly divergent features and new ideas.

When then did the modern notion of a singular definitive original text come into existence? A pivotal period was undoubtedly the nineteenth century, when the cult of genius encouraged expectations of originality and the introduction of copyright legislation lent support to the idea of authorship as ownership. Texts could then be regarded as fixed entities and authors as the owners of these fixed objects. More recently, an outgrowth of this conception has become known as intellectual property, a term whose modern usage dates from the 1980s.<sup>9</sup> What many thus take for granted is actually a historical development of fairly recent vintage. Lydia Goehr, assessing the ascendancy of the "work-concept" in music, has regarded Beethoven as the key figure, and places that development around 1800.<sup>10</sup> Aesthetic and social changes helped nourish this concept of the autonomous artwork, regarded in the laudatory sense as an original masterpiece.

It is revealing to set the plurality of the medieval versions of the Grail myth against the singularity of the most celebrated modern version, Richard Wagner's final opera *Parsifal* (1882). In some ways, *Parsifal* represents an extreme embodiment of the autonomous work-concept, in that its author not only devoted unusual attention to the drama and music but also specifically designed the work for the special conditions of the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth, reserving staged performances for this single unique theater. The notion of *Urtext* (original text) applies here not only to the relation of verbal text and music but also to the staging, and after Wagner's death in 1883 his widow Cosima sought to preserve the

memory of the original production for decades.<sup>11</sup> Like a guardian of the Grail, she vigorously resisted change and asserted for as long as possible the exclusivity of the performances in Bayreuth.

The approach of genetic criticism productively deconstructs this impression of artistic autonomy, restoring a lively sense of the historical context and intertextuality of *Parsifal*. The project had occupied Wagner intermittently for more than forty years, and lines of connection exist between this final work and every one of his earlier major operas and music dramas. In the sense outlined by Daniel Ferrer in his chapter in the present volume, the *avant-textes* of *Parsifal* include *Perceval* by Chrétien de Troyes and especially *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach, both of which influenced Wagner even as he varied, resisted, and critiqued these sources in much the manner described by Harold Bloom. The wealth of sketches and drafts for the music are especially rich in revealing unsuspected connections. From them we learn for instance that Wagner contemplated but subsequently rejected an encounter between Parsifal and Tristan in his earlier opera, *Tristan und Isolde*; that his initial effort to devise music for the Flower Maidens in Act 2 was bound up with the awkward obligation to write a march for the American centennial in Philadelphia in 1876; that the famous opening theme of *Parsifal* was devised as a variation on the “Excelsior” theme composed by his father-in-law, Franz Liszt; and that Wagner expanded the powerful orchestral Transformation Music in Act 1 as his final compositional effort in 1881 after reacting in anger to the news that too little music had been written for the purposes of the staging.<sup>12</sup> This last point is deliciously paradoxical yet characteristic of the kinds of discoveries made through investigation of the creative process: the composer did not want to continue further labors and thought his project complete, yet practical circumstances intervened and in the end, the work benefited substantially from his inconvenience.

This brings us to a crucial point for genetic studies of music, a major emphasis of the present volume. The nineteenth century saw the rise of the notion of “absolute music,” denoting an art that had emancipated itself, through a long historical process, from its traditional dependence on words, dance, or ritual. Beethoven’s legacy loomed large in the debates over “absolute music,” casting a shadow that covered both sides of the aesthetic controversies that raged around Liszt and Wagner on the one hand, and Brahms and critic Eduard Hanslick on the other. By the twentieth century, approaches to musical analysis had become more rigorously systematic, as reflected for instance in the theories of tonal coherence developed by Heinrich Schenker, an Austrian analyst who exerted much influence on North American music theory in the post–World War II period. However, the cultivation of systematic methodologies of musical analysis risks misunderstanding if it identifies the apparent autonomy of the “absolute music” of the Viennese Classics with modern notions of a merely abstract structural matrix. For Beethoven, as for Schiller, the idea of artistic self-determination meant something quite different, whereby the autonomy manifested in the work

by no means insulates it from the world according to the ideal of *l'art pour l'art*, but, on the contrary, enables the work to display a “representation of freedom” as a goal for human striving. When Beethoven described his artistic aims in a letter to his student and patron the Archduke Rudolph, for instance, he referred characteristically to the need for “freedom and progress . . . in the world of art as in the whole of creation.”<sup>13</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Gustav Nottebohm pioneered research on Beethoven’s musical sketchbooks, an unparalleled documentation of the creative process. The voluminous Beethoven manuscripts have become the locus classicus for genetic criticism in music, even if that particular term has been rarely employed. Although Schenker dealt extensively with Beethoven’s manuscripts, his interest in these sources declined noticeably as his graphic analytical method became more systematic.<sup>14</sup> As he focused his attention on the structural autonomy of musical movements, the alternative threads revealed by sketches and drafts seemed beside the point, since Schenker was concerned to construct “a theory of musical coherence that will not open pieces to the infinite intertextuality of the *déjà entendu*,” as Kevin Korsyn puts it. Consequently, Schenker addressed one movement at a time; he had “no way to deal with multimovement designs,” although these aspects assume outstanding importance in Beethoven’s works, and can be fruitfully studied from the perspective of genetic criticism.<sup>15</sup>

The tendency of post-Schenkerian analysts to regard musical structure as a closed system reduced the apparent relevance of Beethoven’s sketches. In the formulation of Douglas Johnson, in a much-discussed article of 1978, “if . . . the codification of Schenkerian principles eliminated the need to consider alternative solutions to analytical problems . . . then the sketches could be safely characterized as failed experiments.” For Johnson, a Schenkerian study like Allen Forte’s book *The Compositional Matrix* of 1961 “dramatized the view [of the sketches] as a branch of pathology.”<sup>16</sup> With musical analysis identified largely with Schenkerian methodology, and these analytical insights accessible from the text of the finished autonomous work, it follows that the sketches would have biographical but no analytical value.

In retrospect, Johnson can be seen to have overestimated the capacity of musical analysis, guided by a belief that the structure of a given work can be read as though it were transparent in the published score.<sup>17</sup> Empirical experience shows, however, that analyses often differ, that no one methodology—such as Schenker’s system—is definitive, and that an overemphasis on “structure” short-changes other aspects of the artistic experience, such as expressive, gestural, and symbolic meaning.<sup>18</sup> If the musical text is understood as a closed system of relations—exuding an aura of infallibility—then *avant-textes* including the sketches seem excluded from the aesthetic field of the work itself. Yet underlying this position is an attitude of dogmatic ideology, which as Lernout observes, is incompatible with genetic criticism. As soon as we embrace an open view of

the work—acknowledging its continuity with historical sources and even the intertextuality of the “*déjà entendu*”—the potential enrichment of such contextual studies becomes apparent.<sup>19</sup>

Similar issues surface in the area of philology. It is problematic if artifacts such as Beethoven’s musical manuscripts are treated with excessive reverence as objects for their own sake, and are thereby deprived of an interpretative context. The so-called diplomatic sketchbook editions published by the Bonn Beethoven-Haus from the 1950s to the 1970s conspicuously avoided editorial intervention and analytical interpretation, offering transcriptions that aimed to be “legible facsimiles” of the original documents; missing clefs, accidentals, and other notational signs were not supplied, and the printed transcription imitated the visual appearance of the manuscripts even if this made little musical sense and if interpretative emendation was urgently needed.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, these editions also avoided the need for reconstructing the sketchbooks by incorporating those pages that were removed by Beethoven or others but that survive in separate collections.<sup>21</sup> With the need for interpretation shunned in these editions, the musical content of the sources is not well conveyed.

What is called for is an *integrated* approach, whereby musical analysis takes guidance from the sources, and the philological work of transcription draws upon analytical insight. The presence of facsimile publications of the original documents can allow the accompanying transcriptions to aim toward a realization of Beethoven’s musical intention. The special importance of documents like the Beethoven sketchbooks lies precisely in their position at the nexus between biography and analysis, history and theory. In the case of Beethoven’s monumental *33 Variations on the Waltz by Diabelli*, Op. 120, for instance, the sketches provide a highly suggestive perspective on the finished work. Although the Beethoven-Haus edition of the main source, the “Wittgenstein” Sketchbook, is inadequate, most of the manuscripts preserving Beethoven’s initial period of composition have survived. When these documents are assembled and transcribed, they offer a picture of the piece as it existed in its draft version from 1819, several years before its completion in 1823. In my book *Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations*, I included transcriptions of pages now in Paris that Beethoven used in the “Wittgenstein” Sketchbook itself, as well as an extended draft on loose papers that can be reassembled from fragments held in several different collections. As these manuscripts show, Beethoven had conceived twenty-three of the thirty-three variations by this time, and the order of these variations remained unchanged when the work was expanded in 1823.

The most revealing musical insight gained from the reconstruction of Beethoven’s 1819 draft of the Diabelli Variations pertains not to the sketches but to the finished work. Through this genetic study, we realize that Beethoven’s final labors on his gigantic set of variations had a guiding purpose: three new inserted variations (nos. 1, 15, 25) relate closely to the original theme by Diabelli, exaggerating its repetitious or trivial features, while many new variations

were incorporated toward the conclusion. The idea of building up groups of variations (the fast variations nos. 25–28 and slow variations in minor nos. 29–31) belongs to this stage of work; but even more fascinating is Beethoven’s practice of writing variations alluding to external contexts, such as the étude-like Variation 23, the Bachian Fughetta (no. 24), an homage to Bach’s “Goldberg” Variations (no. 31), the Handelian beginning of the fugue (no. 32), and the Mozartian character at the outset of the final variation. Capping the enormous sequence of variations is yet another allusion in the coda, this time to the final movement of Beethoven’s own last sonata, the Arietta movement of Opus 111.<sup>22</sup> Neither analysis nor philology on its own is capable of disclosing such an evolving creative idea, and when all the evidence is unequivocal, there is nothing to prevent disclosure of the artist’s intention.

As used in this book, the term “genetic criticism” designates an approach toward primary sources that goes beyond traditional philology in its quest for meaning. Various recent studies have displayed a renewed interest in the potential of philology if such work is pursued in an enhanced interpretative field. In his 2003 book *The Powers of Philology*,<sup>23</sup> for instance, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht argues for this approach as an alternative to an often free-floating textual interpretation and to the more recent redefinition of literary scholarship as “cultural studies,” which often entails a loss of intellectual focus. Such revitalization of philological scholarship can achieve its potential only if it takes into account the hidden desire that has inspired philology since its Hellenistic beginnings: the desire to make the past present again by embodying it. Gumbrecht calls upon the humanities to recover the concept of “lived experience” (*Erlebnis*), and he sees virtue in this proposal precisely on account of “the impossibility of making this notion compatible with the sphere of the collective and social,” insisting that “lived experience, as that which precedes such [collective and social] interpretation, must remain individual.”<sup>24</sup> While Gumbrecht does not privilege the “original *Erlebnis* of the great artists,” he does credit Wilhelm Dilthey’s notion of a “retranslation of objectifications of life into that spiritual liveliness from which they emerged,”<sup>25</sup> a formulation that comes close to describing some of the kinds of insights enabled through genetic studies. The goal is not simply to reconstruct the past, but to utilize source studies as a focus and springboard to new insights in the present.

That Gumbrecht’s conviction is shared is evident from several contributions to the 2007 interdisciplinary volume on *Ästhetische Erfahrung und Edition* (Aesthetic Experience and Editions), whose authors have adopted approaches compatible with Gumbrecht’s view, including the Paris researcher Almuth Grésillon. Grésillon’s studies *Éléments de critique génétique: lire les manuscrits modernes*, and most recently *La mise en oeuvre: Itinéraires génétiques*, represent a notable contribution.<sup>26</sup> As Grésillon puts it, the approach of genetic criticism begins “not with the text, but with the desire to penetrate into the genesis of a literary artwork and convey this process through interpretation.”<sup>27</sup> The task often begins with the first surviving

sketches for a work, but it can also be pursued by exploring alternative versions of a finished product or sketches and drafts that never reached a final realization.<sup>28</sup> Another valuable approach is to explore parallels between different works involving possible models or sources of influence, as in Robert B. Graves's chapter on Samuel Beckett and early film comedy in the present volume. Beckett declined to acknowledge his indebtedness to Laurel and Hardy, but Graves convincingly traces the connection and crosses the lines of genre in his study of pseudocouples, suggesting how Beckett sought to make his character pairs more complementary, creating a symbiosis out of the contrasting figures on stage.

Investigations of the genesis of literary works often uncover a complex process of revision and development, as has been revealed in ever more detail in critical studies and editions of manuscripts by writers such as Heine, Proust, and Joyce. In his contribution, "Variant and Variation," Daniel Ferrer draws on Hans Walter Gabler's critical edition of Joyce's *Ulysses* to analyze the allusive sequence of "theme and variations" in a passage from the "Sirens" episode that invites comparison to musical procedures. What is revealed in such genetic studies is sometimes quite remote from a linear teleological progression, involving not only variants and developments but also detours, transformations, or even the negation of an initial idea. Thus Armine Kotin Mortimer, in her chapter on Roland Barthes in the present volume, describes "the pleasure of . . . rewriting of an original trace, thus refusing origins."

In view of the potential enrichment of literary criticism through such source studies, it is unfortunate that these areas of activity are so often isolated from one another. The need for a closer connection of textual studies to literary criticism has long been recognized, and not only under the banner of genetic criticism. In 1982, Jerome J. McGann described widespread concern over a schism between source studies and literary interpretation, and saw this rift as having grown deeper over the preceding fifty years. For him, textual criticism is "conceptually fundamental rather than preliminary to the study of literature," and it consequently needs "to be reconceived along lines that are more comprehensive," and "be returned to the center of every hermeneutic enterprise." The circumscribed, practical concerns of completing a text of some particular work do not exhaust the contribution of textual studies to literary criticism, and McGann observes that "literary study surrendered some of its most powerful interpretive tools" when it allowed textual criticism to be regarded as "preliminary" rather than integral to the study of literature.<sup>29</sup>

Performing arts such as theater pose special interpretative challenges, owing to the apparent absence of a "finished work as a totally autonomous object that, by granting the status of *avant-texte* to the traces of the creating process, makes genetic criticism possible," in the formulation of Jean-Louis Lebrave. In such contexts, key aspects of the artistic realization remain resistant to analysis as often practiced, though as we have seen, an integrated conception of the relation between analysis and artwork may help bridge the gap. Friedrich Schiller

described the artistic goal in performance in terms of a “play drive” that blends the rational and sensuous, or thinking and feeling sides of human nature, while preserving a spontaneous, improvisatory quality,<sup>30</sup> while Theodor W. Adorno offered a paradoxical formulation, claiming that the work itself was “a copy of a nonexistent original”—for, paradoxically, there is no work as such—it must become.<sup>31</sup> Both formulations point toward the need to embody a sense of dynamic communication or *presence* (*Präsenz*)—an aspect Gumbrecht regards as a “dominant component” in the successful staging of opera, that most complex of performance arts.<sup>32</sup>

Most of the chapters in the present volume derive from an international conference on “Genetic Criticism in an Interdisciplinary Context” held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in March 2007; the conference arose in turn from the ongoing research collaboration between the Centre nationale de recherche scientifique in Paris and the University of Illinois. Coordinated with the conference were workshop performances of a new play by distinguished playwright Moisés Kaufman, *33 Variations*. Kaufman’s play explores the creative process of Beethoven as situated at the intersection of life and art, and thoughtfully probes our engagement with the artistic legacy of this brilliant, fascinating, and witty composer. *33 Variations* has made its way successfully to the professional stage, opening at the O’Neill Theater on Broadway in New York in March 2009, with Jane Fonda coming out of retirement to assume the lead role of the musicologist Katherine, a role named in allusion to the music scholar Katherine Syer.

The Illinois workshop of *33 Variations* enriched the conference as a play exploring Beethoven’s creative process that was itself a work in progress, then still undergoing considerable revision, with passages of text added and deleted at each performance. The theme of the play was especially fitting because of the focus on music at the conference, where Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations were discussed and performed.<sup>33</sup> The stage set for much of *33 Variations* depicts the Beethoven Archive at the composer’s birthplace in Bonn; facsimiles of Beethoven’s sketches are prominent, sometimes as projected images coordinated with the live production of sound. Rarely if ever has a stage work probed so seriously the subject matter of genetic criticism in music.<sup>34</sup>

Beethoven’s posthumous role as a “deaf seer,” in Wagner’s words,<sup>35</sup> has exerted irresistible fascination, and the surviving legacy of his sketchbooks and other manuscripts amounts to thousands of pages. Beethoven’s commitment to the writing and revision process was extraordinary, and the notational specificity and formal control of his music encourages close study, even while the phenomenal nature of music as expressive sound complicates the interpretation of his aesthetic aims. To fellow musicians at that time, Beethoven was an unpredictable artist whose flights of fancy soared beyond the expected to touch luminous and uncanny realms. Ignaz von Seyfried, describing Beethoven’s keyboard improvisations, wrote of Beethoven’s “tendency toward the mysterious and gloomy” and alluded to an esoteric dimension in his art: “But who shall sound the depths of

the sea? It was the mystical Sanskrit language whose hieroglyphs can be read only by the initiated.”<sup>36</sup> On another occasion, Seyfried wrote about his experience turning pages when Beethoven performed his Third Piano Concerto in 1803: “. . . he asked me to turn the pages for him; but—heaven help me!—that was easier said than done. I saw almost nothing but empty leaves; at the most on one page or the other a few Egyptian hieroglyphs wholly unintelligible to me scribbled down to serve as clues for him; for he played nearly all of the solo part from memory, since, as was so often the case, he had not had time to put it all down on paper.”<sup>37</sup> More than twenty years later, in 1826, the violinist Karl Holz described what Beethoven had put on paper—his sketches—as “hieroglyphics, which no human being will decipher! These are the secrets of Isis and Osiris.”<sup>38</sup>

Shall we dare attempt deciphering these hieroglyphs bearing the “secrets of Isis and Osiris?” The longstanding debate in music scholarship about the potential value of analysis of manuscript sources to shed light on the finished works now seems decided in favor of genetic criticism, to judge from the vitality of continuing work on Beethoven and other composers. A major monograph series for genetic studies of musical works has been *Studies in Musical Genesis and Structure*, published by Oxford University Press, with Lewis Lockwood as founding editor and Malcolm Gillies as editor since 1997. Recent Beethoven sketch studies have moved well beyond the pioneering nineteenth-century efforts of Nottebohm, and the expanding field of creative process studies has explored earlier music and especially composers of the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup>

The traces of “lived experience” in a composer’s sketches can help supply a valuable critical focus, discouraging an overly narrow treatment of sources as well as highly structuralist approaches to analysis. An intermingling of biographical and artistic spheres, and of historical and analytical concerns, serves to inhibit the cultivation of discrete methodologies, which in our age of specialization too easily lead charmed lives of their own. If studies of the creative process in music along these lines have rarely been identified explicitly as “genetic criticism,” they are nevertheless often fully compatible with that approach in their aims and methods.<sup>40</sup>

The most celebrated of Beethoven’s sketchbooks is the “*Eroica*” Sketchbook (Landsberg 6), an edition of which is currently being prepared by Lockwood with Alan Gosman. The chapters in this volume by Gosman and Lockwood are connected to this ongoing editorial work, whereas Peter McCallum’s study relates to his edition in progress of Beethoven’s last large sketch source, the *Kullak Sketchbook*, another prize from Beethoven’s “precious hoard,” as Lockwood describes it. McCallum explores Beethoven’s practice in his last years of employing transitions in his works that seem spontaneous and “sketch-like,” suggesting unrealized compositional possibilities while also framing key musical passages as an enactment of authorial decisions in the here-and-now. Such passages often transcend individual movements, inviting “an upward spiral of self-referentiality” that might have made Schenker cringe. Paradoxically, such apparently

improvisatory passages often demanded much sketching and deliberation during the creative process. If the passages discussed by McCallum assume the quality of an overriding search for continuity sustained by memory and expectation, Gosman interrogates sketches of pianistic figuration whose relationship to the completed “Waldstein” Sonata seems uncertain. At what point does conventional material become part of a distinctive artwork in the making? A fruitful approach to such questions should avoid premature conclusions, allowing for what Lockwood describes as a “dynamic, reciprocal relationship between fixed and variable aspects of the material.”

The chapters by James Zychowicz and Joseph E. Jones concern the creative processes of two leading musical figures of the Austro-German tradition at the threshold of the twentieth century: Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss. As Zychowicz observes, Mahler was sensitive to what he regarded as misjudgments about Beethoven’s sketches, and he “champion[ed] . . . Beethoven’s compositional process as if it were his own,” while fearing that his own surviving sketches would lead to misunderstandings. Mahler particularly criticized interpreters of Beethoven’s sketches for having “no notion of what entirely different things could have come from such a first inkling in his hands”—in other words, for embracing an overly linear view of the creative process, lacking sufficient awareness of the transformative possibilities latent in a deceptively simple sketch. One advantage of the approach of genetic criticism is that it gives serious attention to such alternative possibilities, and seeks to avoid judging preliminary working materials exclusively in relation to the finished work.

The “Presentation Scene” in Act 2 of Richard Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* is a celebrated yet disputed passage, and the closing Mozartian duet has been condemned by one eminent critic (cited by Jones in this volume) as the “poorest thing in the opera.” While not denying the presence of triteness, and integrating source studies with interpretive analysis, Jones shows why this quality fits the larger dramatic context. His philological investigation of compositional sources shows Strauss making harmonic choices that shape the dramatic action; no failure of technique is indicated. In this instance, we encounter a typical Straussian “juxtaposition of the profound and the trivial,” a kind of mirror to everyday life conveying something of the fallibility of the human condition, implying that young Sophie will someday resemble the Marschallin. Important as well is the recognition that the closing duet is not a discrete unit, and Jones shows how “Strauss’s handling of the first encounter of the young lovers—the so-called Presentation Scene—as traced from his earliest sketches to the finished score bears significant implications for interpreting the work’s conclusion.”

It is most unusual for a scholar to explore the creative process of a very recent work in direct collaboration with the composer himself, but this is precisely what has been undertaken by Nicolas Donin, together with cognitive anthropologist Jacques Theureau, in the final chapter of this collection. The piece in question is *Voi(rex)*, a work for six instrumentalists, one vocalist, and live electronics

composed in 2002 by Philippe Leroux. This case study carries the chronological scope of our investigations into the twenty-first century. The undertaking also sheds light on the reciprocal relation between composition and analysis, all the more since Leroux himself wrote a detailed article on the subject that refers to the collaborative study.<sup>41</sup> As with Kaufman's *33 Variations*, we are confronted here with a fascinating interplay between art and life, thought and experience, and are reminded once more of the integrative, open-ended nature of the creative process.

The present volume brings together contributions from European, Australian, and American scholars to the growing interdisciplinary field of creative process studies or genetic criticism as broadly conceived and practiced. The essays emphasize music, literature, and theater, but also draw upon examples from the visual arts and film. It is hoped that future studies may find the approaches developed here to be of value in an evolving international scholarly context.

## Notes

1. A valuable recent collection of essays in the genetic criticism of literature is *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-Textes*, edited by Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Noteworthy among various other symposia and publications in this field is the colloquium organized by Almuth Grésillon with Antoine Compagnon on "critique génétique/Genetic Criticism" held at Columbia University in 1994, with published proceedings in the *Romantic Review* (1995). One special issue of the journal *Word & Image* (vol. 13, 1997) is entirely devoted to genetic criticism. That "critique génétique" has been a focus of the Centre nationale de recherche scientifique in Paris is evident from their journal *Genesis: Revue internationale de critique génétique*. Other relevant sources are listed after individual chapters in the present volume.

2. Two of Bloom's most influential books in this vein are *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973; rev. ed., 1997), and *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

3. The inscription as copied by Beethoven is "Ich bin alles, Was ist, Was war, und Was seyn wird, Kein sterblicher Mensch hat meinen Schleyer aufgehoben." It is one of three such inscriptions from Egyptian monuments that appear in Schiller's essay "Die Sendung Moses." The watermark in the paper used by Beethoven suggests a date of 1819. For a facsimile and detailed recent discussion of the manuscript, which is held at the Beethoven-Haus at Bonn, see Friederike Grigat, "Beethovens Glaubensbekenntnis: Drei Denksprüche aus Friedrich Schillers Aufsatz *Die Sendung Moses*" (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 2008).

4. *Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 5, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 25. Babbitt supplies the following translation of the inscription: "I am all that has been, and is, and shall be, and my robe no mortal has yet uncovered."

5. Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 117.

6. *Ibid.*, 24.

7. See, for instance, among other recent studies Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, *Die Sendung Moses* (Munich: Fink, 1997), 179–226; Carl Schorske, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 191–213;

and Michael P. Steinberg, *Judaism Musical and Unmusical* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), esp. 48–56.

8. Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 37–38.

9. Two landmark events in the complex legal development of “intellectual property” were the establishment of the World Intellectual Property Organization in 1967 and the passage of the Bayh-Dole Act in 1980.

10. Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

11. For a study of similar attitudes concerning the staging of opera earlier in the century, see Rachel Cowgill, “Mozart Productions and the Emergence of *Werktreue* at London’s Italian Opera House, 1780–1830,” in *Operatic Migrations: Transforming Works and Crossing Boundaries*, ed. Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Downing A. Thomas (Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2006), 145–86.

12. For a study of the genesis of the music of *Parsifal*, see my chapter “The Genesis of the Music,” in *A Companion to Wagner’s “Parsifal,”* ed. William Kinderman and Katherine Syer (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 133–77.

13. My translation. The letter is dated July 20, 1819, and appears in translation with a brief commentary in Elliot Forbes, ed., *Thayer’s Life of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), vol. 2, 741–42. For a related discussion of the “world background” in Beethoven’s aesthetics, see the introduction to my study *Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995; expanded ed., 2009) as well as Walter Riezler, *Beethoven*, trans. G. D. H. Pidcock (London: Forrester, 1938; first published 1936), 108–9, 198, among other studies.

14. Schenker engages with Beethoven’s sketches and autograph scores in his editions with commentary of four of the last five Beethoven sonatas (*Die letzten fünf Sonaten von Beethoven: Kritische Ausgabe mit Einführung und Erläuterung*, 4 vols. [Vienna: Universal, 1913–21; 2nd ed. 1971–72]) but such references to sources disappear by the time of his study of the Fifth Symphony (*Beethoven: Fünfte Symphonie* [Vienna: Universal, 1925; 3rd ed., 1978]).

15. Kevin Korsyn, *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 99–100. Korsyn points out that even when Schenker’s analytical graphs reveal structural relations between movements he cannot acknowledge them, which “constitutes a remarkable blind spot in his work but one with its own logic” (99).

16. Douglas Johnson, “Beethoven Scholars and Beethoven’s Sketches,” *19th-Century Music* 2 (1978): 15.

17. On this point see Gianmario Borio, “Sull’interazione fra lo studio degli schizzi e l’analisi dell’opera,” in *La nuova ricerca sull’opera di Luigi Nono*, ed. Gianmario Borio, Giovanni Morelli, and Veniero Rizzardi (Venice: Leo S. Olschki, 1999), 3. Johnson softened his skeptical position about the value of sketches in analysis in “Deconstructing Beethoven’s Sketchbooks,” in *Haydn, Mozart, & Beethoven: Studies in the Music of the Classical Period*, ed. Sieghard Brandenburg (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 225–35.

18. Recent work on these topics has appeared in the monograph series on Musical Meaning and Interpretation edited by Robert S. Hatten, including Hatten’s book *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

19. Conventional features of a common musical language have been shared by many composers, but it is the way these elements are assembled that manifests the originality of an artist like Mozart.

20. Such was the case with sketchbook publications edited by Joseph Schmidt-Görg between 1952 and 1972, such as *Beethoven: Ein Skizzenbuch zu den Diabelli-Variationen und zur Missa solemnis, SV 154* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 1968 [facsimile vol.] and 1972 [transcription vol.]).

21. Such source reconstruction is a major contribution of Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

22. For a detailed account, see my study *Beethoven's Diabelli Variations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

23. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *The Powers of Philology: Dynamics of Textual Scholarship* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003); a German version appeared as *Die Macht der Philologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003).

24. *Ibid.*, 84. Gumbrecht cites in this regard the work of Wilhelm Dilthey and Hans-Georg Gadamer, particularly Gadamer's subchapter "Der Begriff des Erlebnisses" in *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 60–66.

25. This quotation is drawn from Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 62, cited in Gumbrecht, *The Powers of Philology*, 84.

26. Almuth Grésillon, *Éléments de critique génétique: lire les manuscrits moderne* (Paris: PUF, 1994) (German translation appeared as *Literarische Handschriften. Einführung in die "critique génétique"* (Bern and Berlin: Peter Lang, 1999); *La mise en oeuvre: Itinéraires génétiques* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 2008).

27. Almuth Grésillon "'Critique génétique' Handschriften als Zeichen ästhetischer Prozesse," in *Ästhetische Erfahrung und Edition*, ed. Rainer Falk and Gert Mattenklott (Berlin: Niemeyer, 2007), 74.

28. For a recent interdisciplinary investigation of issues pertaining to alternative versions of artworks, see Reinmar Emans, ed., *Mit Fassung: Fassungsprobleme in Musik- und Text-Philologie* (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 2007). A recent collection of studies of divergent versions of musical works is *Transkription und Fassung in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Gabriele Buschmeier, Ulrich Konrad, and Albrecht Riethmüller (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008).

29. The quotations are drawn from McGann's essay "The Monks and the Giants: Textual and Bibliographical Studies and the Interpretation of Literary Works" in his edited book *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 190, 182.

30. Schiller's theory is developed in his letters *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen (On the Aesthetic Education of Man)* of 1795; also see Joseph Chytry, *The Aesthetic State: A Quest in Modern German Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 82.

31. Theodor W. Adorno, "Ästhetische Theorie," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 20 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971–86), vol. 7, 32. My translation.

32. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "Produktion von Präsenz, durchsetzt mit Absenz: Über Musik, Libretto und Inszenierung," in *Ästhetik der Inszenierung*, ed. Josef Früchtel and Jörg Zimmermann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001), 76.

33. My studio recording and lecture recital of Beethoven's Diabelli Variations was released as a double-CD by Arietta Records in 2007.

34. Mark Bly, dramaturg for *33 Variations*, describes the genesis of the play in his article "Variations on an Obsession," *American Theatre* 26, no. 3 (March 2009), 36–39, 68–70. Also see Michael Schulman, "The Boards: Primary Sources," *The New Yorker* (April 6, 2009), 24.